



**829**

Migrants interviewed



**30 days**

Average length of stay in BiH



**2,424**

Registrations by the Service for Foreigners' Affairs of BiH (SFA) in March 2024

Top **5** countries of origin of respondents



**71%**

Travelled throughout the country by bus



**29%**

Also travelled by taxis

\*Multiple answers possible



**73%**

of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once



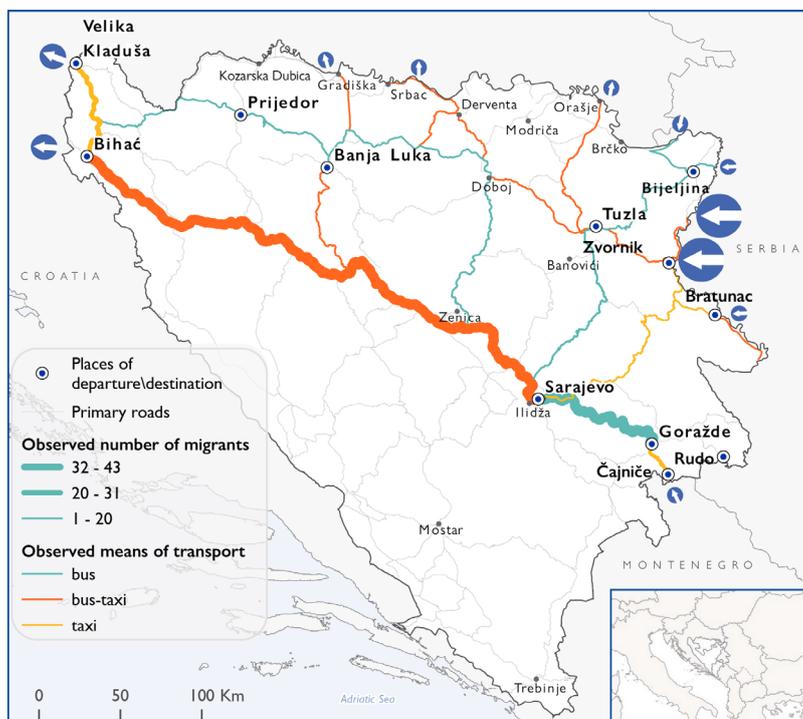
**12%**

Of those outside TRCs not planning to register in any TRC

**6,544**

SFA registrations in 2024

This report provides insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, routes travelled and intentions of migrants transiting through Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).<sup>1</sup> Data was collected from 1 to 31 March 2024. IOM carried out a route observation exercise in the Republika Srpska, Sarajevo Canton, Posavina Canton, Tuzla Canton, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton and Una Sana Canton to monitor trends in entries and exits as well as transit modalities within BiH. IOM also surveyed 829 migrants in active transit locations such as bus stops or at key entry and exit locations throughout the country as well as in four transit reception centres (TRCs) in BiH (Lipa, Ušivak, Borići and Blažuj).



Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM.

Map 1: Most prevalent routes travelled by migrants within BiH

## ROUTE OBSERVATION

- In March 2024, failed attempted border crossings into Europe decreased by 6 per cent, to 73 per cent, compared to 79 per cent in February. In January 2024, it was 58 per cent and in December 2023 it was 41 per cent.
- The map above shows that migrants enter BiH through the eastern border with Serbia or the border with Montenegro further south. Most people entered the area between Zvornik and the Border Crossing Šepak. Other entry points from Serbia were around Bratunac and to a lesser extent Bijeljina. Some respondents reported entering north of Bijeljina near the tri-border with Croatia and Serbia, after having failed to cross into Croatia.
- Although the overall use of buses in the country has remained stable, there was a 14 per cent decrease in the usage of taxis in March. Quantitative data collected shows that the reported usage of taxis for March 2024 was 29 per cent, while in February 2024 it was 43 per cent.
- From Montenegro, the majority of migrants cross into BiH from around the Metaljka border crossing point.
- Most migrants make their way to Sarajevo and travel to Bihac to attempt crossing the border into Croatia in the area of Velika Kladuša. Some migrants also exit BiH around the areas of Bosanska Gradiška, Srbac, and Orašje.

1. Interviewees include migrants in an irregular situation, refugees and asylum-seekers as the reference population consists of mixed migration flows.

From 1 March to 31 March 2024, the SFA recorded 2,424 migrant registrations on arrival in the country, an increase of 56 per cent compared to the same period in 2023.



Figure 1: Migrant registrations in BiH, 2023 vs 2024

## PROFILES

This sample consists of 829 migrants surveyed in bus stations at known entry routes, transit locations and exit locations in BiH as well as in four TRCs (Blažuj, Ušivak, Lipa and Borići). The average age of interviewees was 29, with the youngest being 18 years old and the oldest 60. Most (65%) of the respondents were between 18 and 29 years old and 82 per cent were single. Men represented 86 per cent of the respondents, while women made up the remaining 14 per cent.

In March 2024, Syrian nationals were the largest nationality group in the sample (40%), followed by Moroccan (15%), Nepali (13%), Afghan (7%), and Bangladeshi (5%) nationals.

## JOURNEYS

The average length of stay in BiH was 30 days, five days longer than February 2024. This could potentially be a direct result of increased border patrols and returns from Croatia. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents had entered through one of the border areas with Serbia. Six per cent entered from Montenegro, which is a two per cent decrease compared to February.

The remaining four per cent (31 people) entered by plane. Of the 31 people who arrived by plane, 26 were from Türkiye four were from the Syrian Arab Republic - who may have acquired Turkish citizenship and were therefore able to travel to BiH visa free - and one respondent was from China.

When asked if they were accompanied by people who facilitated their border crossing, 45 per cent of respondents stated that they were accompanied, which is a 9 per cent decrease from February. Respondents who stated they were facilitated paid on average 370 EUR per person to enter from Serbia, a 100 EUR increase compared to February. The cost of entry from Montenegro was an average of 130 EUR per person.

The survey asked migrants how they moved between cities and key locations in BiH. Most (93%) stated they walked, while 71 per cent said that they had taken a bus to travel between some key locations. Apart from the bus, 29 per cent also said that they had taken a taxi. The reported usage of taxis dropped from 43 per cent in February 2024, to 29 per cent in March.

Key informant interviews revealed the average taxi price per person within BiH was 50 EUR.

Seventy-three per cent of respondents had already attempted to cross the border with Croatia at least once. Five per cent of these attempts were facilitated. The most frequently cited (70%) response for failing was that they were intercepted and returned by authorities. Almost all (97%) of those who had attempted crossing the border into Croatia, stated that they would try again.

Survey respondents use social media and instant messaging to organize their journeys to Western Europe. The most frequently used platforms were WhatsApp, Facebook and Viber.

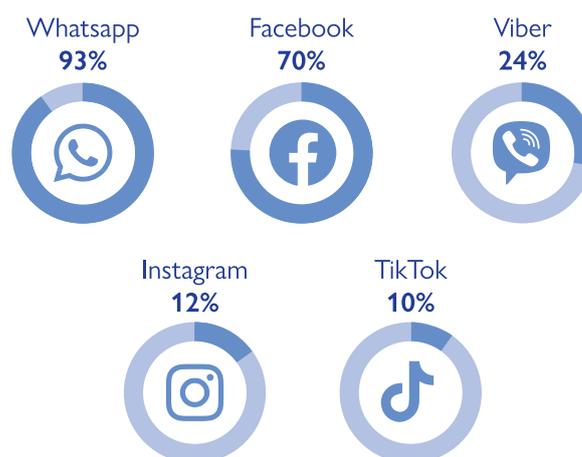


Figure 2: Most frequently cited platforms migrants use to plan their journeys (multiple answers possible) (n=829)

Respondents' most frequently cited needs tend to relate to prolonged journeys throughout the region.

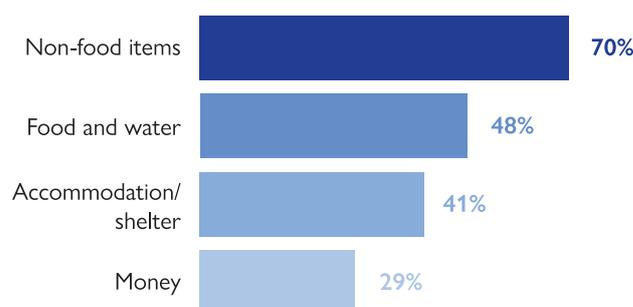


Figure 3: Most important current needs outside temporary reception centres (multiple answers possible) (n=829)

**ACCOMMODATION**

Of those who were interviewed outside formal reception centers at exit locations (n=312), 12 per cent stated that they had not registered in any TRC and do not intend to register. In February 2024, by comparison, all of those interviewed had either been registered in a TRC or stated they they intended to register in a TRC.

Many of those migrants who arrive in the country late at night opt to sleep near bus stations while they wait for transport options. Twenty-four per cent of respondents said they had slept outdoors at one point during their stay in BiH, a twenty-four per cent decrease compared to February. Seventeen per cent squatted in abandoned buildings, an eight per cent decrease from February. Four per cent paid for hostels or hotels. On average, people paid 19 EUR per person per night to stay in hotels or hostels, and 15 EUR for private accommodation.

**INTENDED DESTINATION COUNTRIES**

Figure 4 shows a percentage breakdown of the top five intended countries of destination.

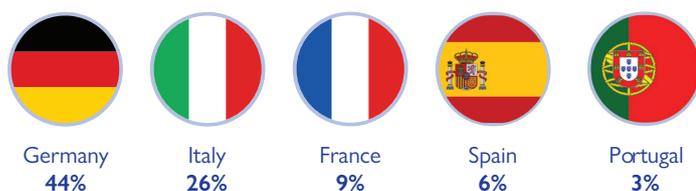


Figure 4: Top five intended destinations (n=829)

Consistent with February, Germany remained the overall top destination (44%), particularly for Afghan (58%) and Syrian (72%) nationals. Forty-two per cent of Moroccan nationals stated Italy was their top destination, followed by France (22%). Bangladeshi nationals mostly stated Italy (74%). Nationals of Nepal stated Italy (40%) and Spain (22%) as their top intended destinations.

Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the three main reasons respondents selected these countries of destination. Figure 6 is a graphic illustration of intended countries of destination by nationality by those nationalities in the sample who had more than five respondents.

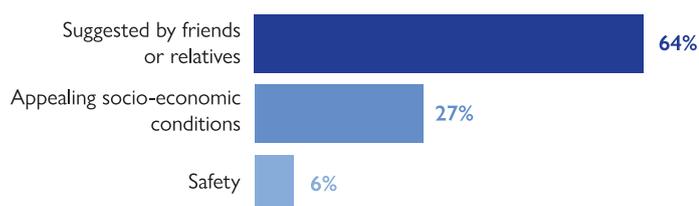


Figure 5: Top three reasons for choosing intended destination country (n=829)

**SPECIAL FOCUS – Nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

To contextualize the journeys, experiences, and complex needs of migrants on the move, IOM carries out group interviews with specific migrant groups every month. This section is not representative but aims to give context to the quantitative data, by portraying one of the many nuanced and diverse experiences of migrants transiting through BiH. In February, IOM carried out interviews with nine people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo inside TRCs in BiH.

- Nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) began arriving in significant numbers in BiH in 2023 when the SFA registered 659 persons from DRC, compared to just five people in 2022.
- Nationals of DRC tend to be a more heterogenous group compared to the other top nationalities, with proportionately more women and children. More than half (51%) of DRC nationals in the TRCs in BiH in 2023 and 2024 were families compared to 13 per cent of the overall reception centre population.
- The Congolese nationals interviewed spoke of travelling to the Western Balkans either directly through various visa (work or student visas) or travelling regularly to Istanbul.
- Those who had arrived directly in a country of the Western Balkans stated that they had arrived with the intention of staying in the region either as student or through specific work arrangements. However, they spoke of discrimination in the labour market, housing market as well as in accessing public services such as healthcare.
- The interviewees who had arrived in the Western Balkans with the intention of staying here mentioned persistent issues around unpaid wages, working over-hours, or being paid less than what was in their contracts. Several interviewees also mentioned the difficulty in finding decent living conditions, because of a perceived unwillingness in letting their apartments to people from Africa. These interviewees mentioned that the cumulative effects of this had triggered their onward movement toward Western Europe.
- When asked if they had considered returning to DRC, respondents mentioned that this was not possible, because their families or communities had invested too much in their journeys to the Balkans.
- Once they had decided to embark on their onward journeys, some respondents mentioned receiving contacts from other migrants while others were approached by facilitators in bus stations. From here, they entered the mixed migratory flows with other migrants, in the hope of reaching Western Europe.

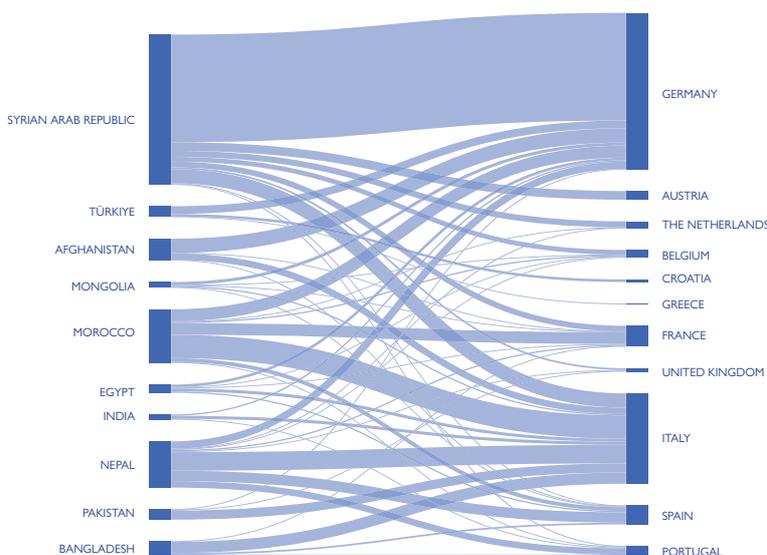


Figure 6: Intended country of destination by nationality (n=829)



IOM enumerators speaking to migrants in Crnaja, Una Sana Canton.  
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## METHODOLOGY

This report uses a multi-source and multi-method approach with the aim of providing insights into the profiles, experiences, needs, movement patterns and intentions of migrants transiting through BiH.

### Survey interviews with migrants

The questionnaire is administered via Kobo Toolbox and collects information on the age, sex and nationalities of respondents, information about their journeys to BiH, registration information and movement modalities within the country as well as their primary needs at the moment of the interview. The survey is anonymized, voluntary and respondents do not receive compensation for participation. Respondents can choose not answer any question and can withdraw their consent at any moment. Data was collected from 1 to 31 March 2024 by seven teams of 13 enumerators (five women, and eight men) in Canton Sarajevo, Una Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Bosnian-Podrinje Canton and Zvornik. Data was also collected in four TRCs (Lipa, Ušivak, Blažuj and Borići). In total, IOM surveyed 361 migrants outside TRCs in the active transit locations mentioned above, and 468 migrants inside TRCs.

### Route observation

IOM field teams observed key entry, transit and exit locations in BiH to gauge the main routes migrants travel to enter the country, to move within and to exit the country. This route observation took place from 25 March 2024 to 29 March 2024. IOM observed 233 migrants and produced the map based on these observations.

### Key informant interviews

Key informants can help provide information on the modus operandi of migrant mobility even when IOM field teams are not present to observe it themselves. The purpose of the key informant interviews is to contextualize the quantitative data gathered through the survey. Key informant interviews are carried out through group interviews with migrants inside TRCs. They are conducted by IOM staff trained in leading qualitative focus group discussions with vulnerable populations.

## LIMITATIONS

The data collection is conducted in the context of the following limitations:

1. IOM field teams collect data in shifts within IOM working hours (07:30 – 18:30). However, many migrants enter and travel throughout the country outside of these hours, and especially late at night or early in the morning before the break of dawn.
2. This data is based on a convenience sample of migrants in the survey locations during the timeframe indicated and can therefore not be generalized to the broader population of migrants in BiH.
3. The data collection is limited to the areas where migrants are known to enter, transit in and exit BiH. IOM continually monitors these locations, with the support of other local partners. However, due to the size of the country it is not possible to carry out this data collection in all areas where migrants may be present. IOM prioritizes the most frequently used entry, transit and exit locations, based on its field presence and contacts with key informants.

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